

## Some Myths About Pronominal Clitics in French\*

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Herschensohn [7], in a recent article in this journal, can be credited with gathering a certain number of myths about pronominal clitics in French, most of which appear periodically in the literature. Like all myths, they carry a certain amount of truth, but also a certain amount of idealization, which sometimes—but not always—weakens the theoretical claims based on them. This note, then, is a simple plea for data.

### 1. IDIOMATIC *le*, *la* AND *les* CLITICS

Emonds [3, 4] argues on behalf of two clitic nodes, CL and PRO, in the base component of French from the existence of idiomatic *en* (for the category CL) and reflexives<sup>1</sup> (for the category PRO) in such idioms as *s'en aller* 'to leave,' *en venir à* 'to resort to,' *en avoir marre de* 'to be fed up with,' *s'évanouir* 'to faint,' to which we could add *y avoir* '(there) to be,' *y regarder* 'to be choosy,' *y paraître* 'to show (intr.),' and *s'y prendre* 'to manage' (cf. Sandfeld [16:139–40, 155–68] for a representative list of idiomatic *en* and *y*). On the other hand, there is no clitic node for *le*, *la*, or *les* in the base, as is explicitly stated in [4:233–4]: "... it is no accident that the one object pronoun clitic placement rule for which one CANNOT justify a deep structure empty node to the left of V' (i.e., the *le*, *la*, *les* rule) can be formulated as a local transformation and that the object pronoun clitic placement rule that MUST contain a variable is one for which one can justify such a deep structure empty node [from the existence of idiomatic verbal expressions, YCM]."

This implies, as far as I can judge, that the clitics *le*, *la*, or *les* cannot be idiomatic, since this would otherwise justify a base node for all *le*,

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<sup>1</sup> Idiomatic clitics are those clitics that appear in idioms and have no independent meaning; in [7:200] they are referred to as "intrinsic clitics."

*la, les* clitics, just as idiomatic *en* and reflexives justify the nodes CL and PRO. This basic approach is adopted in [7].

There are, however, many idiomatic expressions in French with object clitics: *l'emporter* 'to win over,' *l'avoir belle* 'to be at an advantage,' or *l'échaper belle* 'to escape by the skin of one's teeth' (cf. Sandfeld [16:68–70] for a representative list of such idioms).<sup>2</sup>

## 2. DISTRIBUTION OF FORWARD EN

It is often claimed that forward *en*, i.e., the clitic *en* that acts as the complement of the subject, can only be affixed to the verb *être* 'to be,' cf. [7:193, fn. 4]. Couquaux [1] shows that it can also be affixed to most state verbs such as *devenir* 'to become,' *rester* 'remain,' and to two series of verbs that he calls movement verbs (*arriver* 'to arrive,' *monter* 'to rise,' *venir* 'to come') and existence verbs (*apparaître* 'to appear,' *exister* 'to exist,' and *se perdre* 'to be lost'), as in the examples below:

- (1) a. Les résultats *en* restent surprenants  
 'The results *of it* remain surprising'  
 b. La confirmation n'*en* est pas encore arrivée  
 'The confirmation *for it* has not yet arrived'  
 c. L'usage s'*en* est progressivement perdu  
 'The use *of it* progressively disappeared'

We could add to this list a large number of verbs taking a neuter *se* (as defined in Ruwet [15]) besides *se perdre*: *se répandre* 'to spread,' *se deviner* 'to be easily imaginable,' *se conserver* 'to be kept,' *se faire sentir* 'to be felt,' *s'imposer* 'to become necessary,' *s'effacer* 'to get blurred,' and *s'ébruiter* 'to get known,' as in the examples (2), or such verbs as *manquer* 'to lack,' *prendre* 'to hold,' *démanger* 'to itch,' *plaire* 'to please,' *dégoûter* 'to disgust,' *sourire* 'to appeal,' *transpirer* 'to filter out,' *filtrer* 'to filter out,' and certainly many others, as in the examples (3).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In some, but not all cases an idiom with an idiomatic clitic has a variant with an idiomatic NP, e.g., *les mettre*: *mettre les bouts*: *mettre les voiles* 'to leave.'

<sup>3</sup> Couquaux [1] notes that the verbs that allow forward *en* are either state verbs or verbs that take an impersonal construction with extraposition of the subject, e.g., *arriver*, cf. *il arrivera des hommes* 'men will arrive.' This generalization does not seem to hold for all the verbs in (2) and (3). Furthermore, there are some speakers who seem to accept forward *en* with such verbs as *augmenter*, *diminuer*, for which an impersonal construction is not possible:

- (2) a. Le bruit *s'en* est vite répandu  
'The rumor spread fast'
- b. Le dénouement *s'en* devine déjà  
'The end is already foreseeable'
- c. Le souvenir *s'en* est conservé  
'The memory *of it* has been kept'
- d. Le besoin ne *s'en* fait pas sentir  
'The need *for it* is not apparent'
- e. L'usage ne *s'en* imposait pas vraiment  
'The use *of it* was not really necessary'
- f. A mesure que la déclinaison disparaît et que le souvenir même *s'en* efface (Foulet, quoted in Sandfeld [13:149])  
'As declension was disappearing and as the memory *of it* became blurred'
- g. La nouvelle *s'en* est ébruitée  
'The news *of it* became known'
- (3) a. Ce n'est pas l'envie qui m'*en* manque  
'It is not that I have no wish to do it'
- b. Si l'envie t'*en* prend, fais-moi signe  
'If you feel like it, just tell me'
- c. L'envie m'*en* démangeait vraiment  
'I was really dying to do it'
- d. Rien que l'idée m'*en* dégoûte (P. Margu, quoted in Sandfeld [13:149])  
'I am disgusted just by thinking of it'
- e. L'idée m'*en* plaît assez  
'I am interested by it'
- f. L'idée ne m'*en* sourit guère  
'The idea *of doing it* does not appeal to me'
- g. Rien n'*en* a encore transpiré  
'Nothing got out yet'

*Le préverbe en incombe à la partie adverse*

- (i) a. La consommation n'*en* a pas beaucoup augmenté  
'The consumption *of it* did not increase considerably'
- b. La fréquence n'*en* diminuera certainement pas avant longtemps  
'The frequency *of it* will not decrease before a long period'

We also find some literary examples such as (ii) with verbs such as *mentir* 'to lie' for which an impersonal construction seems difficult.

- (ii) Mon père sentit si vivement l'atrocité de la calomnie, qu'il se jeta sur une plume et mis à la marge [du livre YCM]: *L'auteur EN a menti* (Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*)  
'My father resented strongly the cruelty of this slander, ran for a pen and wrote in the margin: *the author [of this] lied.*'

- h. La nouvelle n'*en* a pas encore filtré  
 'The news has not filtered out yet'

### 3. NONCLITIC COUNTERPARTS FOR *EN* AND *Y*

Herschensohn [7:190] claims that "there are no alternation [of *y* and *en*] with nonclitic forms." First, it is not clear what this statement means. The clitics *en* and *y* certainly alternate with nonclitic PPs, e.g., *j'ai parlé DE ÇA* 'I spoke of that' : *J'EN ai parlé* 'I spoke of it'. Probably she meant that *en* and *y* do not alternate with simple pronominal forms. But even this is not true; *y* alternates sometimes with the pronoun *là*<sup>4</sup> 'here' and with the relative pronoun *où* 'where,' and *en* alternates sometimes with the relative pronoun *dont* 'of which':

- (4) a. Je vois *là* l'influence du diable  
 'I see in that the devil's influence'  
 b. J'*y* vois l'influence du diable  
*id.*
- (5) a. Tu *y* vas  
 'You are going there'  
 b. *Où* vas-tu?  
 'Where are you going?'
- (6) a. Tu *en* as parlé  
 'You spoke about it'  
 b. le voyage *dont* tu as parlé  
 'the trip you talked about'

### 4. THE *Y EN* SEQUENCES

Grammarians have noted for a long time that the *y en* sequences, except in the idiomatic expression *il y (en) a* 'there are (some),' are infrequent. Still they are not absent in the literature. Literary examples have been recorded by Grevisse [6: Section 506] and Damourette et Pichon [2: Sections 938 and 2370]; we quote here the following one:

<sup>4</sup> This word *là* 'here, there' is traditionally called a locative adverb, and is classified together with *ici* 'here,' *ailleurs* 'elsewhere,' *nulle part* 'nowhere,' *quelque part* 'somewhere,' and so on. It is also used anaphorically, and plays then the same role as the other anaphoric pronouns. In some uses, as in sentences (4), *là* and *y* appear to have exactly the same function.

- (7) Il naît à Paris plus de femmes qu'il n'y en meurt (Buffon, *Histoire naturelle*)  
 'More women are born in Paris than die there'

Quoting Grevisse—who is not particularly well known for describing the usage of the masses—Herschensohn [7:217, fn. 30] claims that the *y en* sequences are excluded in their speech. It is possible that some regional varieties of French exclude such sequences, but this should be investigated, as it cannot be inferred from Grevisse's statements. On the contrary, in many regional varieties of French where one of the normal substitutes for *lui* is *y*<sup>5</sup>—in particular in Québec or in Brie, near Paris (cf. Morin [11])—the *lui en* sequences are realized as *y en* without any restriction, as in examples (8).

- (8) a. J'y en donne [ʒyādɔn]  
 'I give him some'  
 b. Donnes-y-en [dɔnzyā]  
 'Give him some'

Actually, the restrictions against *y en* sequences do not appear to be any different than the restrictions against other sequences of clitics, such as *lui y/leur y*,<sup>6</sup> *me lui/te lui*, and so on,<sup>7</sup> or *l'y/lles y*<sup>8</sup>; the *y en*

<sup>5</sup> This substitution is very old and is found in literary works at least as early as the 15th century, but appears to be shunned in modern literary works. This change has been attributed to the weakening of the former dative clitic *li*, or simply to a confusion between *li*, *lui*, and *y*. Note that the liaison occurs also before the *y* variant of *lui*, e.g., *vous y parlez* [vuʒiparle] 'you speak to him,' unlike what happens before the (probably more recent) 'ui [wi] variant of *lui*, e.g., *vous 'ui parlez* [vuwi'parle].

<sup>6</sup> For example, Wehrli [17:213] claims that *lui y* and *leur y* sequences are impossible and offers the single example (i) as being ungrammatical.

- (i) Max lui y donnera le billet  
 'Max will give him the ticket there'

On the other hand, Gross [6:46] accepts a *leur y* sequence in the example (ii):

- (ii) Ils leur y succèdent  
 'They replace them at this [position]'

Actually, these two statements may not be completely incompatible. In a very brief examination of these facts, I noted that speakers prefer the *leur y* sequences to the *lui y* sequences, everything else being equal, and that *leur y* sequences do not have the same degree of acceptability in all syntactic environments. In particular, there appears to be a ranking of acceptability in sentences (iii): (a) is better than (b), which in turn is better than (c).

- (iii) a. Il leur y fera penser  
 'He will have them think of it'

sequence has acquired a special status only as a result of the analysis of clitics by Emonds [3, 4], which requires that there should be only one syntactic site for both *y* and *en* in the base,<sup>9</sup> while it imposes no such restrictions on *lui y* or *l'y* sequences.

- b. Il leur y succèdera  
'He will replace them at this [position]'
- c. Max leur y parlera  
'Max will speak to them there'

The same kind of syntactic conditioning also holds for *y en* sequences. I conducted a small test involving 13 persons (geographical distribution: 5 from Québec, 1 pied-noir, 1 from Bayonne, 1 from Bordeaux, 1 from Saint-Etienne, 1 from Maine-Normandie, 1 from Brie, and 2 from Liège) who were asked to give a judgment of grammaticality for sentences (iv). The following results show that all *y en* sequences do not have the same grammatical status:

|         |  |                   |
|---------|--|-------------------|
| (iv) a. | J'y en ai planté deux<br>'I planted two of them there'   | accepted<br>(15%) |
| b.      | Ajoutez-y-en deux<br>'Add two of those to it'  | (31%)             |
| c.      | J'y en ai ajouté deux<br>'I added two of those to it'  | (54%)             |
| d.      | Tu y en trouveras quelques uns<br>'You will find some there'                                       | (38%)             |
| e.      | Tu n'y en trouveras pas<br>'You won't find any there'  | (54%)             |
| f.      | Il s'y en est passé des choses ici<br>'It sure looks like a-lot of things happened here'           | (46%)             |
| g.      | Il s'y en est dit des choses ici<br>'They sure said lots of things here'                           | (46%)             |
| h.      | Il naît à Paris plus de femmes qu'il n'y en meurt<br>'More women are born in Paris than die there' | (92%)             |
| i.      | Ils leur y succèdent   | (15%)             |

<sup>7</sup> Here too, the *me lui/te lui* and so on sequences have varying degrees of acceptability depending on their function. Most speakers will refuse (i) but accept (ii) (cf. Postal [14]). (cf. Damourette and Pichon [2: Section 942] who report the existence of speakers accepting sentences such as (i).)

- (i) Il me lui présente  
'He introduces me to him'
- (ii) Il me lui semble fidèle  
'He seems to me to be faithful to her'

<sup>8</sup> The *l'y* and *les y* sequences are rare in literary examples when they are enclitic in imperative constructions. In some regional varieties of French, they are also rare in proclitic position (cf. Morin [11]), leading to the following kind of contrast:

- (i) Le voilà prêt  
'He is ready now'
- (ii) M'y voilà  
'Here I am'
- (iii) <sup>s</sup>L'y voilà  
'Here he is'

<sup>9</sup> In one of his original formulations, Emonds [3:9] assumed that *y en* sequences were possible only when *y* was idiomatic as in *il y en a*. Even if this were true, it is not clear

## 5. HOW LONG CAN CLITIC SEQUENCES BE?

It is true that long sequences of clitics are less frequent than short ones. Single clitics are more frequent than sequences of two clitics, and sequences of three clitics are rather exceptional. Although sequences of three clitics may contain an ethical dative, they are not necessarily restricted to this; the only sequence of three clitics without ethical dative that I found both in literary examples as in (9) or in spontaneous colloquial French as in (10) is the *s'y en* sequence (see also in note 6, the examples (iv f-g) which may indicate that such sequences are not as peripheral as is claimed in [7]).<sup>10</sup>

- (9) J'avoue ne pas connaître aucun illettré d'aucun hameau de Pérignac—et, s'il *s'y en* trouve un ou cinq cents, je serais fort

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how he can reconcile the existence of such sequences with the principles that lead him to posit the nodes PRO and CL in the base. As I mentioned earlier, these two nodes are justified by the existence of *se* and *en* in idiomatic expressions such as *s'en aller*, *s'en faire*, *s'évanouir*, *en bayer*, where *se* is taken to be an instance of PRO and *en* as an instance of CL. We certainly should expect idiomatic expressions such as *s'y prendre*, *y avoir*, and the like to receive the same kind of analysis, where *se* would be an instance of PRO and *y* an instance of some base category, which can only be CL if there are only two base categories for clitics. This means that *y* in *y avoir* should be a CL, with the result that *en* should not be cliticizable in the expression *il y en a* because there can be only one CL attached to the same verb. It is only because Emonds decides to have two completely different treatments for idiomatic *en* and for idiomatic *y* that he is able to overcome this contradiction. Still one cannot but feel unsatisfied by an analysis where idiomatic *en* justifies the existence of a node in the base and where idiomatic *y* does not: one cannot but have the impression that the nodes posited by Emonds in the base have nothing to do with idiomatic clitics.

In his later formulation Emonds [4:227, fn. 22, 234, fn. 31] recognizes the need to account for *y en* sequences in French. Rather than modify his original formulation, he proposes a completely ad hoc move to allow *y* to belong to two different categories PRO or CL as the need may be. This is not only ad hoc, but also wrongly limits the sequences of three clitics, cf. Section 5.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it cannot be length alone which forbids sequences such as *le lui en* in sentences such as (i-c) below [which we would expect from the existence of *le lui* and *lui en* sequences in the same syntactic framework as in (i-a) or (i-b)]. Actually, it can be shown that the agrammaticality of (i-c) has nothing to do with the presence of three clitics, as this sentence remains ungrammatical with only the *l'en* sequence as in (i-d).

- (i) a. Je *le lui* ramènerai de Paris  
       'I will bring it back to him from Paris'  
     b. Je *lui en* ramènerai un beau cadeau  
       'I will bring him back a nice gift from there'  
     c. \*Je *le lui en* ramènerai  
       'I will bring it back to him from there'  
     d. \*Je *l'en* ramènerai à Marie  
       'I will bring it back to Marie from there'

empêché de le ou les consulter par écrit. (Terrache, *Bull Soc. Ling.* 24:265, quoted in Sandfeld [16:2])

'I admit that I know no illiterate inhabitant in any hamlet of Pérignac—and, even if there were one or five hundred, I could hardly consult him or them by writing'

- (10) Il *s'y en* est passé des choses ici pendant mon absence  
'It sure looks like things happened here while I was gone'

## 6. SOME ETHICAL CLITICS ALTERNATE WITH PPs

It is commonly held that ethical clitics do not alternate with PPs. The facts, however, are not all that clear, because the notion of ethical dative itself varies considerably from author to author. Following Leclère [10], we may distinguish two kinds of dative constructions: (a) lexical datives, i.e., datives that subcategorize the verb as in (11) and (b) nonlexical datives. For some authors, all nonlexical noninalienable datives are ethical datives; others will further distinguish among the nonlexical datives, recognizing not only inalienable datives as in (12), but also extended datives as in (13) and ethical datives proper as in (14). Extended datives can be further subdivided into benefactive as in (13a), adversative as in (13b), and reflexive as in (13c).

- (11) Je donnerai un livre *à Pierre*  
'I will give a book to Pierre'
- (12) J'ai écrasé une patte *à ce pauvre animal*  
'I ran over this poor animal's paw'
- (13) a. Je *lui* écris tous ses discours  
'I write all his speeches for him'  
b. Il *lui* a bu toute sa bière  
'He drank all his beer on him'  
c. Alors, on *se* le mange, ce melon  
'What are we waiting for to start eating that melon'
- (14) a. Regarde-*moi* ça!  
'Look at that!'  
b. Au Mont Saint-Michel, la mer *te* monte à une de ces vitesses  
'Near Mont Saint-Michel, the tide is coming in like crazy'

Leclère [10] argues that ethical datives proper are restricted to first and second persons, which could perhaps account for the fact that they are always clitics, since (lexical) PPs behave semantically as third



persons.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, inalienable and extended datives, although more frequently clitic, may also be PPs, depending on many factors, more or less understood. Leclère gives the following examples:

- (15) a. Paul *lui* a sali cette nappe  
 'Paul soiled her table-cloth'  
 b. Paul a sali cette nappe à *Marie*
- (16) a. Depuis le temps qu'elle attend ça, un chemin *lui* longe enfin sa propriété  
 'After waiting all that time, she got a path next to her land'  
 b. ?Depuis le temps qu'elle attend ça, un chemin longe enfin sa propriété à *Marie*.

In particular, the dative in sentences (17) is ambiguously analyzable as inalienable or adversative, and can be either a clitic as in (17a) or a PP as in (17b). (Sentence (17b) is given as ungrammatical in [7:198, example (26b)]; all the speakers that I consulted were quite pleased with it.)

- (17) a. On *lui* a tiré dans le ventre  
 'They shot him in the stomach'  
 b. On a tiré dans le ventre à *ce (pauvre) garçon*  
 'They shot this (poor) boy in the stomach'

## 7. HOW FREQUENT ARE ETHICAL DATIVES?

It is often claimed that ethical dative constructions are statistically rare, and therefore are syntactically marked, cf. [7: 217–8]. I fail to see why there should be a direct relationship between statistical frequency and syntactic markedness, since the low frequency of ethical datives may have nothing to do with syntax. Could we say that constructions involving the pronoun *tu*, *toi*, and so on. 'you (sg.)' would

<sup>11</sup> In particular we should note that the NPs *que moi* 'only me,' *que toi* 'only you,' and the like seem to behave semantically as third persons, as appears in the examples (i):

- (i) a. Ça n'a fait *se* retourner *que moi*  
 'It only made me turn around'  
 b. \*Ça n'a fait *me* retourner *que moi*  
 c. Ça *m'*a fait *me* retourner  
 'It made me turn around'

be syntactically marked if some social conventions made them improper to use, except with close friends?

Besides, how infrequent are ethical datives in the social conditions that allow their normal use, i.e., in informal conversations? To have an idea, I decided to count the occurrences of ethical clitics in the reported conversations of a traditional tale, recorded live in 1949 and analyzed by La Folette [9:23–33, *Merlin et la bête-à-sept-têtes*]. The narrator does not seem to have been too disturbed by the recording and makes his characters speak rather naturally. I noted five ethical dative constructions, given below:

- (18) a. vous allez *me* bâtir une petite maison dans votre forêt  
 vous allez *me* creuser un grand trou  
 vous allez *me* trimer ça avec un lit  
 b. [Je] m'en vas *vous* le pogner, votre gars  
 mets-*moi*-les en charpie

Their frequency compares favorably with the frequency of some of the other clitic pronouns in the reported conversations of the same tale: clitic *les* (two occurrences), clitic *lui* (two occurrences), sequences of two clitics besides (18b) (four occurrences).<sup>12</sup> These results may not be significant, as they are limited to a rather small corpus. Still they show that there are few reasons a priori to consider ethical clitic constructions as syntactically more peripheral than the other clitic constructions.

## 8. UNSTRESSED NP PRONOUNS

It is true that some NP pronouns cannot appear as complements of most verbs, unless they receive some contrastive or emphatic stress. However, this cannot be taken to be a general property of all NP

<sup>12</sup> In the narrative part of the tale, the ethical clitics are less numerous, as should be expected because the narrator may choose a nonconversational style. Nevertheless, he sometimes addresses the listener directly, and we have yet another instance of ethical dative construction:

- (i) Il *te* les a charbonnés comme il faut.

Even then, if we consider the whole text [reported conversation *and* narration] the ethical clitic constructions (with six occurrences) are statistically comparable to some other clitic constructions: *les* (six occurrences), *lui* (five occurrences), or sequences of two clitics (five occurrences, if we exclude (i) and (18b)).

pronouns nor to apply independently of the verb to which they are complements, as is implied by the bare pronoun filter in [7:205].<sup>13</sup>

First, the pronoun *ça*—which has a subject clitic form, mainly before *être*, but also elsewhere, cf. Morin [11]—has no proclitic object form and regularly appears as an NP object without contrastive stress as in (19).<sup>14</sup>

- (19) Le fromage, j'aime pas *ça*  
'Cheese, I don't like'

Second, there are some verbs that do not allow any or some clitic object pronouns. After these verbs, the bare NP complement may appear without contrastive or emphatic stress:

- (20) a. Si c'était moi, je lui aurais dit  
'If it had been me, I would have told him'  
b. \*Si *ça* m'était, je ...
- (21) a. *Ça* prendrait toi pour faire ce travail  
'We need you to do that work'  
b. \**Ça* te prendrait pour faire ce travail
- (22) a. *Ça* me rappelle vous  
'It reminds me of you'  
b. \**Ça* me vous rappelle

<sup>13</sup> In the formulation of this bare pronoun filter, there appears the feature *-strong*, which is hard to understand, because it is not defined elsewhere. It is mentioned in footnote 17 where it contrasts with the feature *clitic*. If I understand the filter correctly, it says that a bare clitic pronoun cannot fill a surface NP position. Since clitic status is not a lexical property of underlying object pronouns, there must be some kind of rule which distributes the feature  $\pm$ *strong*. The only such rule given in [7] is the morphophonemic rule of strengthening (ii) in footnote 17:

- a.  $-III \rightarrow +strong / \underline{\quad} \#$   
b.  $+III \rightarrow +strong / \# \underline{\quad} \#$

If the traditional conventions regarding  $\#$  boundaries apply here, strengthening should apply to all bare NP pronouns in object position, which are normally flanked by two  $\#$  like all other NPs. Since the filter is said to apply after all morphophonemic rules, it is completely useless to filter out sentences such as *je vois lui*, for which it was proposed, unless there is a special rule deleting boundaries at the right place. This of course means that the filter is really irrelevant.

<sup>14</sup> It could also be argued that object *ça* is actually a regular clitic in this position (in the terminology given by Zwicky [18]) in opposition to the other clitic pronouns which are special clitics. The same observation holds for the variant *là* of *y*, which also appears after a verb without contrastive or emphatic stress as in the example (4a).

Compare Damourette et Pichon [2:Section 942] for some literary examples of sentences such as (22a) with the verbs *se rappeler*, *se disputer* 'to quarrel,' and so on.

## 9. PRONOUN ALLOMORPHY AND STRESS

The difference in distribution of the pronominal forms *moi* and *me*, of *toi* and *te*, of *lui* and *le*, and so on are partly the result of former stress differences. It is often claimed that the difference in distribution of "strong" and "weak" forms is totally predictable on the basis of stress assignment, and this is again repeated in [7:207]. We have shown [11, 12] that the evolution of French does not support such analyses. On the contrary, there is a real tendency to dissociate the clitic system—whether it be enclitic or proclitic—from the NP system. In particular, in modern French<sup>15</sup> the NP pronoun *lui* 'him' has two clitic forms: the enclitic *le*<sub>1</sub> (phonologically /lœ/ or /lø/, with a stable vowel) and the proclitic *le*<sub>2</sub> (phonologically /lə/, where /ə/ represents a mute *e*, i.e., a vowel that can be syncopated in some phonological environments<sup>16</sup>). The claim, therefore, is that one should morphologically distinguish three series of pronouns: NP pronouns, strong enclitics, and weak clitics. All explanations of this three-way distinction through stress appear to be either ad hoc or impossible, as there are no differences in the stress patterns of minimal utterances such as *sans lui* 'without him' and *prend-le* 'take him.' Herschensohn's proposal [7:206–8] is rather vague, but does appear to be incapable of accounting for the opposition *lui:le*<sub>1</sub> in such cases.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> At least in the regional French of and around Paris. The situation is slightly different in the regional French of Saint-Etienne, cf. Morin [13] and perhaps in some forms of Belgian French, where a situation similar to that of Saint-Etienne may prevail, if Kamman's [8:148] description of standard French has been influenced by this regional speech.

<sup>16</sup> However, the *e* in proclitic *le lui* sequences may not always be syncopated, cf. [11].

<sup>17</sup> Herschensohn proposed "three levels of stress in French (assigned at different points in the derivation): 3, unstressed; 2, (phonological) word stressed; 1, (phonetic) breath group stressed." The 2 stress falls on the last syllable of a word [from the examples, a verb and its clitics form a phonological word] unless this word is final in a breath group when the syllable receives a 1 stress. Third person clitics are strong only if they receive a 1 stress as shown in (i), while first and second person clitics are strong if they receive a 1 or a 2 stress as shown in (ii).

- 3
- (i) a. Il le rend à Paul  
'He gives it back to Paul'

## 10. CONCLUSION

In this note, I have reexamined a certain number of assumptions implicitly or explicitly made about French clitics and pronouns. We have seen that, contrary to what is usually assumed, (1) the accusative clitics *le*, *la*, *les* can be part of idiomatic verbal expressions, (2) that forward *en* is not restricted to verbal constructions with the verb *être*, (3) that the clitics *y* and *en* have nonclitic pronominal counterparts, (4) that *y en* sequences, although infrequent, cannot be considered more exceptional than sequences such as *lui y* or *l'y*, (5) that sequences of three clitics, even though they are rare, do not always involve ethical clitics, and do not appear to have a special syntactic status—at least, no more special than some sequences of two clitics—(6) that some ethical clitics do alternate with PPs, depending on the definition given to ethical datives, (7) that ethical clitics, in the right social context for their use, do not appear to be statistically less frequent than other clitics, and finally (8) that noncontrastive bare NP pronouns are not to be ruled out in French.

Some of the wrong assumptions that we examined here have circulated for quite a long time. In some cases, there does not appear to

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- b. Rends-le à Paul  
     <sup>2</sup>  
     'Give it back to Paul'
- c. Ils sont partis sans lui  
     <sup>1</sup>  
     'They left without him'
- (ii) a. Il me rend ça  
        <sup>3</sup>  
        'He gives it back to me'
- b. Rends-moi ça  
     <sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>  
     'Give it back to me'
- c. Ils sont partis sans moi  
     <sup>1</sup>  
     'They left without me'

Herschensohn does not mention the case of third person dative clitics *lui* and *leur*, which do not fit nicely into this generalization (clitic datives *lui* and *leur* are invariant with respect to proclitic and enclitic positions but are not necessarily identical to the NP pronoun; to clitic *lui* correspond NP *lui* and *elle*, and to clitic *leur* correspond NP *eux* and *elles*).

Still, if I understand properly Herschensohn's proposal, in a sentence such as *prends-le* 'take it,' the enclitic *le*<sub>1</sub> receives a 1 stress, just as *lui* does in *sans lui* 'without him,' because they are both final in a breath group—which is correct phonetically. Her proposal, however, wrongly predicts that a form such as *prends-le* is impossible, since *le* can only occur with a 2 or a 3 stress, and predicts on the contrary that *\*prends-lui* 'take it' should be grammatical.

be any strong reason why this should have been the case, except perhaps because of some unconscious desire to make the facts fit some new proposed theory, e.g., the implicit claim that *le, la, les* cannot be part of idiomatic expressions, although their existence has been well established for a long time and is mentioned in most comprehensive standard descriptions of French. In many cases, however, it is through theoretical attempts to formalize the description of clitic pronouns that new facts were discovered. In particular, it is only after forward *en* has been explicitly distinguished from the other clitic *en* that its distribution could be made precise, a first approximation being that it occurs only in verbal constructions with *être*—perhaps the most frequent case—a second appraisal showing that its distribution is certainly wider, but with some restrictions, as yet undescribed.

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